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Outstanding Assurance .....	\$913,556,733
New Assurance Applied for .....	\$256,552,736
Amount Declined .....	39,436,748
New Assurance written .....	\$217,115,988

HENRY B. HYDE, President.

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## A FOURTH ON THE FARM.

"I tell you, mother, the boys shall celebrate once in their lives if they want to, an it's no use arguin' over it. I've promised them for the last two year that they should have fireworks—skyrockets, Roman candles, an' all them things—an I've never kept my word before, so I'm goin' to this year. I've never felt able since Jed Bunker brought suit agin me an got possession of the Robbins place just as we was goin' to move down there, but now."

"Now you're goin' to make a show of yourself just because there seems to be a chance that the decision of the court will be reversed an we may get what we bought an paid for with our hard earned money."

"Well, ain't that enough to make us feel good, hey? Why shouldn't we celebrate?"

"I advise you to wait till you are sure this new evidence of yours mounts to anything. Elisha. The courts may not give the case a new hearin an'—"

"They can't refuse, mother. It's a clean case of robbery, an we'll have Bunker packin up an movin in six weeks. I hope he'll move so fur away that that stuck up son of his'll never get to see Lizzie agin. S'pose I'd have a darter of mine marry a Bunker! Not if she never got married!"

and Elisha Stone knelted the ashes from his clay pipe so savagely that the stem was broken short off, whereat he spluttered and fumed fiercely.

Mrs. Stone calmly continued with her knitting for some moments, but she finally dropped it in her lap and pushed her spectacles up on her forehead, observing:

"There, there, Elisha, don't make such a row over an old pipe. As for Dick Bunker, he seems a rather likely sort of young man, even if Jed Bunker is his father an'—"

"Mandy Jane," almost roared the old farmer, "do you mean to say you favor that young rascal? Do you mean to say you would have the son of our worst enemy sparkin round our Lizzie?"

"Well, not exactly that," replied the woman, rather overawed by her husband's manner. "But, m'm, she might do worse."

"She might? I'd like to know how! I know there ain't many likely young men out in this country, an for her sake I sometimes wish we'd never left New Hampshire an moved out here. I'd never do it if the old farm hadn't run out there, an then I got beat on this place. There ain't no water here, an I've spent more'n \$800 on that confounded old well."

"Money throwed away," sighed Mrs. Stone, picking up her knitting and resuming work in a mechanical manner.

"That's so," confessed Elisha, slightly shamefaced. "It's no thin but a hole in the ground, an lately it smells so bad there's near no endurin it when the wind blows this way. I don't understand it at all, an if I was goin to stay here I'd have to fill in that hole to stop the stench."

"We may stay here, arter all, father."

"May? I guess not. We'll move just as soon as the law turns Bunker out."

"Which I fear it'll never do. You know Bunker claims Noah Jackson, the man to which you paid your money, didn't have no real title to the property, an the judge told you you'd have to look to Jackson to get your rights."

"That's folderol! How'm I goin to look to Jackson when nobody knows where on the face of the earth Jackson's gone to? Besides that, if this new evidence mounts to anything, Bunker was in league with Jackson an the place belongs to me. I tell you, I feel good enough to celebrate a little myself, an I'm goin to see the boys have a good time. You hain't got no patriotism in ye, mother. The Fourth of July oughter be celebrated by ev'rybody in this great an glorious country ev'ry time it comes round. Now don't make no more talk about it," he cautioned as he saw his wife was about to speak again. "It's no use talkin, for I have sent for the fireworks, an they'll sure be here tonight, so the boys can shoot 'em off to-morrow night, an that settles it."

With that he arose and marched out of the house, leaving Mrs. Stone to her knitting and her thoughts.

"S'pose Elisha thinks he's goin to celebrate the Fourth," she murmured, "but it'll really be celebratin because he thinks he's goin to get the best of Bunker at last. Well, maybe he will, but I dunno's Bunker's so much to blame, for he did make it look pretty clear he had a prior claim to the place. My opinion is that Jackson is the rascal, else he'd never run away the way he did, but there's no use sayin so to Elisha, he's so sot."

That night at dusk Lizzie Stone slipped out by the back door and stole away down the lane that led to the pasture. Her manner betrayed the fact that she feared being seen by some of the family, for she paused several times and looked back nervously over her shoulder.

Lizzie was a pretty girl, bright and rather talented, but not without a touch of the romantic and frivolous in her nature. This, however, would disappear in later years when she came to understand life as it really is, and, for the time being, it made her seem all the more attractive to the young men who knew her.

Of all these young men there was but one for whom she really and truly cared, and that one she met at the foot of the lane, which Elisha Stone had laid out in genuine New England fashion, much to the wonder and amusement of his western neighbors. He was leaning on the fence and waiting for her as she approached.

"Lizzie, I feared you would not come!" he exclaimed, reaching over and clasping her hands, while she saw his eyes gleam through the dark with a light that set her heart fluttering and her pulses throbbing.

"I had to steal away," she replied, in a low tone, feeling that her cheeks were burning. "If father'd seen me—"

"He wouldn't have seen you," he said, his voice steady and hard. "I'm not. The judge has decided there's not enough evidence to reopen the case, an the lawyer can't find ground for a new suit. Jed Bunker has bent me."

"How did you get that?" he asked, rather huskily, as he ripped open one end and drew forth the document contained within.

"Ike Neuman left it as he passed on his way home from town," she replied, her eyes fastened anxiously on his face.

He read it through without uttering a sound or making a sign. Then he went out into the night once more, and for nearly an hour he was absent. When he returned, she was sitting just as he left her.

"Mandy," he said, his voice steady and hard. "I'm not. The judge has decided there's not enough evidence to reopen the case, an the lawyer can't find ground for a new suit. Jed Bunker has bent me."

"The Fourth came and brought with it"

(Continued on Fourteenth Page)

He drew her closer, and one arm slipped about her shoulders. She struggled and remonstrated a little, but she soon stood with bent head listening to his impulsive declaration of love.

"If I were a scoundrel," he said, "I might try to induce you to run away with me, but I mean to win you by fair means, and win you I will!"

"Father!"

"I know, sweetheart, but say you will marry me, and I will find some way to obtain his consent. I will go to him tomorrow and ask for you."

"No, no! That would ruin all! You don't know my father! He is so stern and set! He has forbidden me ever speaking to you again, and if he were to know I met you here there would be serious trouble."

"Still, my only way is to go to him like a man and ask for you. Then, if he refuses, I must find some way to overcome his opposition. Say you love me, Lizzie—say you will marry me—give me liberty to ask him for you!"

"It would be worse than folly, for you are Dick Bunker, the son of the man father considers his worst enemy."

"My father is not your father's enemy. In truth, father is very sorry Mr. Stone was swindled by Jackson, and he says he would willingly spend money and time to bring the rascal to justice."

"Ah, but you could not convince father this is true if you tried a year. He believes your father and Jackson were leagued together to swindle him—it is on that ground he is trying to bring the case into court again. He feels certain of obtaining a new trial and winning. Why, he feels so good over it that he is going to celebrate the Fourth with fireworks tomorrow night. He sent to town for them, and they came in a big box this afternoon."

Dick Bunker shook his head. "He is celebrating too soon, if he is spending his enthusiasm because he feels sure of victory and not from a patriotic motive. Father's title is clear, and a new trial will simply mean further expense for Mr. Stone with certain defeat in the end."

"He will fight as long as he can, and the result must make him more set against you. Oh, Dick, what can we do?"

"Trust to me and keep a brave heart, my girl. It must come out right at last. Give me liberty to ask him for you. I will do so tomorrow. What if I am refused? It is the right and proper way for me to do."

And thus he urged her till she finally consented, although she did so with the utmost reluctance.

"What is that odd smell in the air?" he asked, with uplifted head. "I have noticed it every time there was the slightest breeze."

"It must be the old well father spent so much money on. It gives out a singular smell."

"It seemed more like a rank pipe, but it may have come from the well."

"I must go now," declared Lizzie in sudden alarm. "I have staid too long already."

There would be a terrible scrape were I missed."

He suddenly drew her close and kissed her across the lips. It was well they were so absorbed by the delight of the moment that they did not observe a suppressed agitation beyond the scrub bushes that ran down by the lane fence.

When the lovers had departed and disappeared in the darkness, a man arose from behind those bushes.

"So my girl meets that young rascal like this, an he makes love to her!" snarled a voice that plainly belonged to Elisha Stone. "He smelled this old cob pipe, an that near let 'em know I was here. Well, let him come an ask me for Lizzie! I'll soon put an end to this foolishness!"

He shook his clinched fist toward a distant light that he knew shone from the window of the Bunker place and then moved away toward his own house, savagely chewing the stem of his old cob with his teeth.

Having passed about half the distance to the house, he halted, for a familiar odor had assailed his nostrils.

"That darned old well!" he growled wrathfully. "I'd just like to know what makes it smell so!"

He changed his course and approached the spot where he had endeavored to strike water by boring deep into the earth, but had succeeded only in spending a considerable sum of money. As he came nearer the odor became stronger, and when he was quite close to the well he could scarcely endure it. He also noticed something he had never noted before. A strange whistling sound came from the well.

"Well, that thing beats all water. It's a reg'ler hoo-doo! I'll have it plugged up anyhow, an we'll begin on it next Monday."

When he reached the house, he found his wife sitting by a dim light in the dining room, her knitting dropped in her lap. "In a moment he realized by her attitude that something was troubling her."

"What is it, mother?" he asked.

Without a word she took a long envelope from a stand at her elbow and handed it to him. The light showed him the familiar card of his attorney at the upper left hand corner of the envelope.

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(Continued on Fourteenth Page)

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